

Hand Claps & Dancing

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One of the most effective tools for variety at a dance is to include some dances with some hand claps at certain points in the dance. Sharp taps with a foot on the floor are also very effective. For example, on a **Forward and Back**, a quick high five can often be done on beat four of the **Forward** part and clapping your own hands together can be done on beat eight. Hands claps give everyone an audible clue that they are doing the dance correctly and that they are dancing in time with the music.

In some ways, it is a game that the dancers play among themselves. A way to communicate that they hear and understand the music. "Tunnel Contra" ([click here](#)) is an example of how complex the game can get. This dance normally a very simple beginner party contra. It uses only **Forward and Back**, **Pass Thru**, **U-Turn Back**, **Sashay** and tunnels made by forming two hand arches. However, once the sequence of hands claps are added, it become a challenge.

The simple dance routine works fine for beginner parties. However, when this dance is used for community dances, it is probably time to add in the hands claps described for the dance. They add precision and a zest to a dance routine that could otherwise become quickly boring.

"Theil's Trio" ([click here](#)) is really built around hands claps and foot stomps. The music is a hoedown that was produced for squares callers who could make use of silent sections in the music to entertain the dancers with clever patter. It wasn't very successful as a hoedown, but it has survived for use in "Theil's Trio" and in several other dances that I know about.

I generally encourage hands claps and foot taps. I feel they add a lot to the dance. The sharp sound made by eight hands clapping in a four hand **Star** and they reverse direction is cool. The coordinated foot tap of everyone on the eighth beat of the phrase at certain points in a dance adds to the dance.

I am not a big fan of the loud and crude looking "stomps" I sometimes see in contra dances on YouTube. They take away from the beauty of choreography of the dance routine. This harkens back to the days when dances were closely linked with booze and fights and that is not the image I want in dances I lead.

In a lot of ways, it represents the kind of party that is happening. Is it a party for raising H _ _ _ and letting off steam in a wild and uncontrolled manner? Or is it a party where people dance together to create something beautiful and enjoyable?